

Notes for Environmental Conference

22-24 August 2000

St. Louis, MO

Session: Partnering

By

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1. My personal experiences to date include:

- a. **Coastal America Partnership**—involved in the establishment of the Partnership from the beginning and served as the Corps representative in developing the concept.
- b. **American Heritage Rivers** – The Corps now has identified and is providing two River Navigators (New River and Upper Mississippi) to this initiative to serve as Federal coordinators.
- c. **Clean Water Action Plan** – Again the Corps is playing a participating role in this initiative (you'll hear more on the CWAP later today in the session on Initiatives)
- d. **Livability** – The most recent initiative which deals with integrating existing federal programs in such a manner as they collectively deliver the kinds of services communities are seeking. (Again I'll speak more to this partnership in the session on Initiatives later this afternoon)

Clearly, from the above you can see that there is a growing trend across the country for federal, state, local, tribal and NGO to seek greater collaborative activities through partnerships in an effort to satisfy the needs of communities and achieve the goals of their individual programs.

2. Observations on Some Elements of Successful Partnerships:

- a. **Trust**— This is paramount in the development of a successful partnership; however it must be understood that it takes time to establish trust, particularly if potential partners have had a rocky past. A strong level of trust creates an atmosphere of neutrality and leads to innovation.
- b. **Buy-In** – Senior management of the partnership agencies must accept and support the idea of collaborative activities and accept the notion that their particular agency will not always be the lead. Further, the notion of solving the problem and not being concerned with who gets the credit should be strongly fostered within the partnership.
- c. **Collaboration** – Requires a good working knowledge of your agency's programs and with time an understanding and knowledge of the programs of those agencies with whom we are partnering. Again this can lead to innovative solutions as program understanding leads to unique integrative methods and ultimately to comprehensive solutions.
- d. **Problem Understanding** – I use the term “problem understanding” as opposed to “problem identification” for one reason. The types of collaborative activities engendered by partnerships of the type identified above often involve local communities and we must, as public servants, **LISTEN**, to the needs and desires of these communities in order to provide solutions.
 - i) Understanding the problem, together with knowledge of agency programs, can lead to comprehensive and innovative solutions.
 - ii) Comprehensive and innovative solutions require the empowerment of the partners by their senior management and the ability to take risks.

- iii) Comprehensive and innovative solutions often lead to cost savings and/or the ability to spread out the federal costs via in-kind services, use of local and NGO resources, and cost sharing.
- iv) Don't say, "No" say, "Why not?" Focus upon solutions for the community we're seeking to help.